

The LAPSE of ENOCH WENTWORTH

By ISABEL GORDON CURTIS
Author of "The Woman from Wolverton"
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG
COPYRIGHT, 1914 BY F. G. DRONNE & CO.

SYNOPSIS.

Enoch Wentworth, journalist, and Andrew Merry, actor, act as the stakes absolute control of the future of the lower Wentworths. They decide to keep the matter secret, Enoch, knowing from her brother, Enoch, of Merry's shortcomings, tries to arouse his ambition. Merry reads the plot of a play he has had in mind and he urges him to go to work on it. When the play is completed Merry reads it to Wentworth whose life ambition is to write a successful play. He demands Merry's play as a forfeit of the bond won in the poker game. Preparations for staging the play are begun, but Merry, who is to take the leading part, is missing. Dorcas proves a success in the leading female part at rehearsal. She quarrels with her brother for taking credit for a play she knows to belong to Merry. Dorcas and Merry among the doings in the play, which Enoch tries to induce Merry to make. The actor refuses, but finally consents on condition that Wentworth assume his situation as Zilla Paget, the heavy woman in the play, who has a bad reputation.

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

"Here is the second act," said Wentworth brusquely. "I imagine it will suit you. The changes are exactly what you suggested."

"Oh, splendid!" Oswald's voice was cordial. "I'm ever so glad you felt like it. You will say yourself it is an improvement."

"I hope so," Enoch spoke listlessly. "And, Dingley, while I think of it, send a message back to Miss Paget. Ask if I can see her now, in her dressing-room for a few minutes." He turned to Oswald. "I must explain to her the change we're making. Better have the part copied at once; it must be put into quick rehearsal."

CHAPTER XIV.

The Opening Night.

Dorcas stood motionless in the wings, with Merry beside her, leaning against a table. The curtain had fallen on the third act of "The House of Esterbrook." The girl's body trembled from head to foot, and she felt as if the emotions of a lifetime had been crowded into that single hour. There was a babel of noise behind the scenes; in front the applause sounded like a tempest. At intervals the hand-claps died away as from weariness, only to begin again with tremendous vigor.

"Come," said Merry; "we must go out again."

"Again?" whispered the girl.

"Yes," Merry smiled; "this time the two of us alone."

"The two of us?"

"The two of us—alone." There was a low, tender thrill in Merry's voice.

He took her hand and led her out upon the empty stage. The curtain was lifting slowly. From where she stood she saw Enoch standing in the wings. His face was flushed with excitement. The audience looked to the girl like a blur of color and human forms. The people awaited forward eagerly, and the applause became uproarious. A voice cried, "Speech! Speech!" It began to come insistently from the back of the house. The cry was taken up by men and women everywhere in the audience. Dorcas turned to Merry, Oswald was beckoning to him from the wings, but the actor shook his head.

"I could not make a speech tonight if my life depended on it," he whispered, and the curtain descended slowly.

A new cry came from the clamorous house. Some one was shouting for the author. Dorcas laid her hand upon Merry's arm.

"They want you," she cried.

He smiled and shook his head. "She heard Oswald urge Enoch to go in front of the curtain. The noise in front grew louder. The girl flew across the stage and put her hand upon her brother's shoulder.

"Enoch," she pleaded in a whisper, "take Merry with you and explain."

Wentworth left her without a word. Oswald and the stage manager beckoned to him from the wings. She took a few flying steps as if to hold him back, then stopped. Merry had called her. She paused, staring into his eyes with terror.

"Enoch must not go out there alone," she protested in a low voice. "He must not do it. You should be with him. It is the last chance he has to make restitution. He will never, never do such a thing as this!"

"Listen," she heard Merry's whisper clearly through the din. "Dear, it does not matter. What does anything matter? The play is a success. You believe in me. I did it—for you. What do I care about the people out there? They are nothing to us."

"Oh!" cried Dorcas, "oh, I will go and tell them myself. They must know!"

She darted toward the edge of the drop curtain, then she stopped. A silence had fallen, not only upon the hands who had been dragging properties about the motionless. A shiver crept over the girl. She felt Merry lay his hand on hers with a steady clasp that seemed to quiet her. She could hear Enoch speaking. He had a strong, vibrant voice. Every one behind the scenes was listening and understanding except herself. His voice grew blurred as faces in the audience had been. She turned to glance at Merry. Once a look of consuming hatred fitted across his face, and his lips grew pallid as gray ashes.

dress as soon as you can. And Julie, ask Dugald to get a carriage. I want to go home."

The woman kissed the girl's neck as she unbent her gown. "It has been an awful strain. I know all about it—but Miss Dorcas, your future is made."

The child returned in a minute. "Mr. Wentworth has a carriage ordered. Dugald says will you go with him?"

"No," cried Dorcas; "tell Dugald I'm ready in ten minutes. I am going home alone."

Merry stood waiting at the stage entrance when she went out. He had heard Julie deliver the message. "Good night, Miss Dorcas," he said. "Sleep well. Remember, everything is all right. I owe it to you, I owe you more than you understand. You made good tonight; the papers will tell you so in the morning. Good night. God bless you!"

"Good night," the girl shivered for a moment. It was intensely cold, and she drew a fur coat close to her chin. The cabman drove quickly, for the streets were empty of vehicles. Along Broadway the theaters were dark.

Jason stood waiting to open the door when the girl ran up the steps. His dusky old face was one grin of delight. He had just returned from the theater and was growing impatient for the triumph of a homecoming.

"Missy," he cried, "yo' certly done us proud. My soul! I couldn't er' believed da baby I toted yeans en yeans ago ud ebbin' er' lived to act ez fine ez yo' done. I used to play I was yo' black mule. I reckon yo' don' member, honey, ridin' mule on ol' Uncle Jason's back, do yo'? En dar yo' was, honey, a-workin' me up till I 'clar to goodness I mos' cried my ol' eyes out. When Marse Enoch come out en made dat speech folks holered en got to der feet clappin' en bangin' sticks on de floor, I 'clar to de Lawd dar wa'n't a prouder ol' ducky in New York den Uncle Jason."

Dorcas began to laugh and cry at once.

"I don' wonder yo's all done up. Missy, I's got de fines' supper ready for yo' er' ebbin' see."

Dorcas was too unnervered to eat. She swallowed a cup of coffee and nibbled at the good things Jason had prepared. Then she went upstairs and began to undress. She brushed her hair, plaited it in two long braids, and slipped into a gray kimono, which folded itself about her in shabby waves. The coffee had driven sleep away. She tossed a shawl about her shoulders and ran down through the silent house to the library. Wentworth often read there until long after midnight, and a coal fire was burning brightly.

She pushed an armchair close to the hearth and dropped into it wearily. She realized that she was very tired. She had not thought of nerves or body during the long weeks of rehearsal, with the incessant study, the multitude of detail, and the strange irregularity of life.

She began to live over again the last few hours and drew a long breath as she remembered the strangling terror which laid hold of her before she made her first entrance. When she heard her cue she felt dumb, crippled, almost blinded for one moment. The smile on Zilla Paget's face, as she stepped from the wings, stung her into action. There was scorn in it, and cruelty smoothed over by a sweet, beguiling perfdy, which aroused in the girl a sudden hate that she had never felt in her life before. The hatred made her forget everything except her part.

The recollection of a bit of gossip had flashed to her memory; Zilla Paget had prophesied that her "Cordelia" would be a dead failure. Before the end of that second act the intense loathing and scorn which Merry had put into her lines became real. The woman understood. She shrank with a terror which was scarcely stimulated during the girl's denunciation of a mother who had lost all claim upon a child for love or respect. Seven times the curtain rose and fell upon the two women. Once a volley of hisses was hurled at Zilla Paget, and she smiled in happy triumph. Oswald and Merry stood in the wings watching the act. The intensity which Dorcas threw into her part stirred both men strongly, as it did the audience. They had anticipated womanly sweetness and tenderness, but they

had not gauged her emotion to the depths.

"I never dreamed she could do anything like this," said Oswald slowly. Merry did not speak. He had caught Zilla Paget's subtle smile. He knew there was more than acting in the scene.

While Dorcas sat gazing into the red caves of the coal fire she went over each situation in the play, step by step. Once she buried her face in the folds of her shawl; her cheeks were throbbing hotly. She felt Merry's kiss burn upon her lips. There had been no real kisses at rehearsal. The trust and love and gratitude with which the broken old convict turned to his child seemed real for a moment; she felt it when the actor touched her lips. Then she had fallen sobbing into his arms. She heard the audience sob with her. When she turned to glance aside through half-blinded eyes, she met the derisive smile of Zilla Paget, who stood in the wings. There was jealousy in her scorn. Her part was over for the night; she was dead to people in front. They had forgotten her, in spite of the applause she had won a half hour before.

Dorcas came out of her reverie with a start. The door behind her closed, and Enoch walked in. His face was glowing with eager, impetuous triumph, his cheeks were flushed, and his eyes shone. He stooped suddenly to kiss his sister. She did not speak. It seemed years since she had seen him in such a mood.

"Dorry," he cried, "why did you rush home? Everybody was waiting to congratulate you. You lifted people off their feet; I swear, you took me off mine! The critics went wild over you and wanted to interview you. Tomorrow you'll be the talk of the town."

Everything that had blurred life seemed to vanish. It was wonderful that in a few hours the dreams of a lifetime should have come true. The girl laughed. Her heart had suddenly grown light.

"Enoch, I cannot make myself believe it."

He stood beside her with a proud smile upon his lips. "Dorry, you're a queer proposition. Any other girl would have had her head turned by the triumph tonight. Why, child, in three hours you climbed straight onto a pedestal that many women work half a lifetime to reach. Even then they often miss it."

Enoch bent and lifted her face till her eyes looked into his. "There were minutes," he said fondly, "when I actually questioned whether it was the little sister herself or not."

Dorcas had never seen her brother so strangely excited. She wondered for a moment if he had been drinking, but she saw it was the intoxication of sudden success, not of wine. He paced about the library, talking, laughing, building a thousand plans for the future. The girl watched him curiously. It was a strange transition from the sullen silence of months. The Enoch of light-hearted boyhood days had returned.

"You have a great future, Dorry," he stopped abruptly and his voice grew grave. "There is one thing I want to say. Don't," he hesitated and began to pace the room again, as if choosing his words carefully, "don't make a hero of Merry. He did well tonight. I have seen him set the whole town talking as he did in 'Esterbrook,' then topple back and go down, away down."

Dorcas rose from her chair and tossed the long braids of hair over her shoulders. Her eyes and cheeks were blazing. Wentworth's face grew inexpressible. "Enoch," she cried, "how dare you say such a thing—to me?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean!" He saw her chin tremble. In spite of her anger she was on the verge of tears. "When people were calling for the au-

thor, how did you dare to go out and take the applause? Have you no conscience, no honor left?"

"Merry got as much applause as one man could stand." He looked at her with dogged defiance.

"That makes you none the less—a thief."

Enoch did not answer. He pulled a cigar from his vest pocket, lit it, and began to smoke. He did not flinch before his sister's gaze.

"I should have been the happiest girl in the world tonight, almost foolishly happy. There was a pitiful quaver in her voice. 'I feel now as if I were disgraced. Men have gone to the penitentiary for stealing—less than you did.'"

Wentworth laughed scornfully. He tossed his cigar into the heart of the fire and turned upon Dorcas in sudden rage. "Stealing is not a nice word."

"It is nice enough for what has happened."

"Do you know," asked Wentworth with grave deliberation, "what did happen? Has Merry ever taken you into his confidence about this transaction?"

"Merry has never said one word against you—to me."

"Then reserve your judgment until he does. If you were to ask him, and if he played fair, he would tell you that it was a straight, honest bargain, a bargain bought and paid and signed for. Merry, with all his failings, is no wretch."

"Bought and paid and signed for?" repeated the girl in slow bewilderment. "How could you buy and pay for something conceived by another man's brain and written by another man's hand?"

"That is my business, wholly," answered Enoch coldly. "It is an affair no woman would understand." He paused to light another cigar; then he turned to Dorcas with such authority as he had never used to her before.

"I want to say one thing before you leave this room. It is about the question of the authorship of this play. It is not to be brought up again at any time between us. Do you understand?"

"I understand," Dorcas answered quietly. "I understand it is perfectly useless to appeal to a conscience which is dead."

Enoch shrugged his shoulders. "If that is the way you choose to put it, well and good. It seems to me a pity that you cannot drop this altogether and—forget. The future looks bright for both of us. We could easily go back to our old happy life if you would."

Dorcas moved toward the door. "I cannot forget. I promise you one thing, Enoch, I will never speak of it again."

"Thank you," said the man brusquely.

CHAPTER XV.

Master Robin Tully. When the curtain dropped on the last act at a Saturday matinee, Dorcas passed on the way to her dressing-room and glanced out at the stage door. Rain was lashing the street in furious, wild-blown torrents. The few people who braved the storm bent their heads against it and plodded on with determination. Nearby, a street organ was wheezing the "Miserere" in pitiful appeal to a heedless crowd at the theater door.

Dorcas returned to her dressing-room. It was a delightfully cozy retreat—Mr. Oswald had seen to that. Alice Volk sat repairing a gown.

"Where's Julie?" Dorcas demanded. "She's asleep in our dressing-room." The girl seated herself in front of the mirror and began to remove her make-up. At intervals she glanced over a bunch of letters which lay on the dressing table.

"I used to wonder how it would feel to be famous. Of course I am not famous yet," said Dorcas quickly; "I am merely one of the people you hear of in passing. Still, I cannot grow accustomed to the queer experience of seeing my name blazoned on every housetop when I ride on the L, or finding my picture in papers and magazines. People stop on the street to stare at me; occasionally they whisper my name to some one who is with them. A girl I went to school with wrote the other day and asked for sixteen autographed portraits to give as favors at a party. She was a rich child, and at school she snubbed me unmercifully."

"It's the way of the world," the other woman answered. "A little of it came into my own life."

"It's a queer way," Dorcas continued, "and somehow already I feel blasé. The love and trust I have from Julie and you is something worth while."

Mrs. Volk rose to hang up a gown she had been repairing. As she passed Dorcas she bent and kissed her cheek. The girl looked up with a grateful smile.

"Suppose," Dorcas suggested, "we have a little spread right here. I can order a hot dinner sent in. It's a wretched night—What do you say?"

"If I were to speak for Julie, you know how she would enjoy it."

"Phone to the Beauceler for a menu. It will be fun."

Half an hour later the dressing-room looked like a small banquet hall, for the property man had put everything he controlled at their disposal.

"Listen," said Dorcas to the waiter, who stood ready to take their order. "bring us consommé, boiled salmon, celery, cucumbers, and sliced tomatoes, potatoes, string beans, roast chicken, lettuce, almond meringue pie, coffee, and—is that all?" she asked of Julie who stood peering over her shoulder.

"Ice cream and cake," suggested the child.

"Of course," cried Dorcas; "it's so long ago since I was a little girl I had forgotten that ice cream and cake is much more important than soup."

Julie turned to gaze at the table. "Isn't it a pity, Miss Dorcas, there are only three of us, when there are four sides to a table?"

Dorcas laughed. "I'll let you pick out a guest for us, Julie. Who shall it be?"

"Well, let me think." The child paused. "There's Dick—Dick would do anything for us. He's only a call boy, but he's nice. Then there's Robertson. He loaned us the chairs and table. Robertson's the nicest man in the Gotham—almost. We could have had Brunton, but she's just going out. Then there's Mr. Merry. I believe," she added decisively, "I would rather have Mr. Merry than anybody."

Dorcas bent to rearrange a knife and fork.

"How do you know Mr. Merry is in?"

"He is," cried Julie. "He called me into his dressing-room when I passed and gave me these." She unclasped her hand to show three caramels squeezed into a sticky lump.

"Would your mother like to have him here?"

Julie did not wait for her mother to answer.

ordered the waiter to set the dishes on the hot radiator, then she sent him away. Julie took her place delightedly.

"You're a clever waitress," said Merry.

"I used to plan to be a waitress when I was grown up," said the child, while she gathered plates neatly on a tray. "That was before I went on the stage. Playing the little 'Cordelia' is nicer than being a waitress."

"It means getting rich faster," said Merry gravely.

"Of course," agreed Julie. "Still, it must be delightful work to be a waitress. Before we found you, Mother and I used to go mornings to a little restaurant to get hot cakes, and I loved to watch the waitresses. Some of them were pretty. They had lovely hair and cunning little muslin aprons."

Merry laughed. "You were wise to decide on 'Cordelia.'"

"I know that. I would be quite happy to be 'Cordelia' with you, even if I didn't get any money for it. Of course, though, it's lovely to get my salary envelopes once a week, and to have nice rooms at Mrs. Billerwell's, and all we want to eat, and clothes and shoes. I am growing rich—I have a bankbook!"

"Really?"

"I have four hundred dollars in the bank."

"Four hundred dollars!"

"When I have two thousand I am going to buy a little house out in the country. Mother and I picked it out one day when Miss Dorcas took us driving. We will keep chickens and a pony and a cow, and have cherry trees and radishes and pansies in the garden."

"I will come and board with you," said Merry, "if I don't have to milk the cow."

"Oh, Mother," cried the child impetuously. "I never thought of keeping boarders before!—only we can't charge Mr. Merry much."

"May I come too?" asked Dorcas.

"Oh, that would be lovely!" Julie laid down a chicken bone she held between her fingers to clap her greasy little hands joyfully. Merry was telling a ridiculous adventure which had once befallen him on a snowbound train when he was interrupted by a timid knock at the door.

Julie rose to open it. She turned to look back at her mother with a bewildered glance. A small, odd figure stood motionless in the doorway—a little boy with serious, brown eyes.

"A Small, Odd Figure Stood in the Doorway."

His straight, yellow hair was cropped in a fringe about his eyes, then it waved upward. He wore a black suit with long, tight trousers. A round jacket, over a white shirt, reached to his waist. In his hand he held a hat like a small saucer.

"Hallo, David Copperfield, where did you come from?" cried Merry.

"That isn't my name." The child had a soft English accent. "I have heard of 'David Copperfield,' but I'm not 'David,' sir, my name is Robin Tully."

"Come in, Master Robin Tully," said Merry, "and have dinner with us."

The child stared at them steadily but did not move.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

NOVELTY IN CITY STREETS
Employment of Skis as a Method of Locomotion Astonished Seasoned New Yorkers.

People in Audubon avenue, in the upper section of the metropolis, were treated to a spectacle on a winter afternoon that New Yorkers do not have the opportunity of beholding every day.

Because of the snow vehicular traffic had been largely suspended and the trolley cars were not running. Two modes of travel were available to those who did not care to walk—automobiles and sleighs. These conveyances became so numerous that they soon ceased to attract much attention, but now and then some persons remarked, "That's the only way you can get over the snow today unless you foot it."

These positive persons were soon apprised of the fact there was still another means of travel over the snow. Their attention was attracted by a man going north on Audubon avenue. Even at a distance it was apparent that he was not walking.

When he drew near it was seen that he was on skis and he was experiencing difficulty in making headway. It was hard walking in the skis, and even the grips which he carried in his hands were not assisting him to any extent.

Pedestrians turned around and stared at the sight. If they had been in Norway they would not have paid attention to the man, but in New York a man on skis is a novelty. As one pedestrian ejaculated as he gaped at the man, "Say, he must be of his way to the north pole."

The Old Companies. The Old Treatment. The Old Care.

They—the best in all the land. I represent the Hartford—Phenix—Continental—Columbia—Royal, the really STRONG Insurance Companies.

I have a fine list of lands for sale—and wish Yours, when you sell.

Write every kind of Insurance. Do Conveyancing, draw up Wills, Deeds, Leases, Etc.—RIGHT. Very much desire YOUR business, and will care for it well.

H. F. McKeever, Jackson, Nebr.
Successor to Ed. T. Kearney.

Insurance. Real Estate. Conveyancing. Steamship Tickets.

Col. E. F. Rasmussen

Farm Sales, Real Estate and Live Stock Auctioneer

100 Tin Cups furnished. See me Early for dates. One price to all. Write me Ponca, Nebr., box 10, or Phone 56 at my expense.

Licensed Embalmer Lady Assistant
Ambulance Service

Wm. F. Dickinson Undertaking

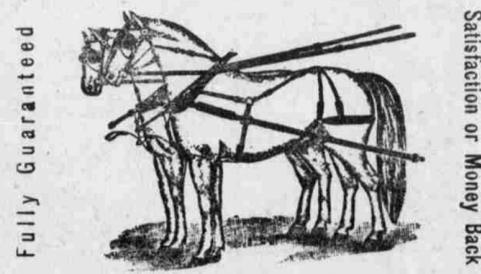
415 Sixth Street
Sioux City, Iowa.

"A Growing Business Built on Our Reputation"

Cattle, Hogs and Sheep Steele, Siman & Co.

SIoux CITY, IOWA
Hundreds of Dakota County Farmers Ship Us. Ask them about us. Our Best Boosters. We Work for You. Write Us. Ship Us.

Ask Your Dealer to Show You



The Famous Sturges Bros. Harness

If they Don't Have Them, write or call on Sturges Bros., 411 Pearl St., Sioux City, Ia.

Henry's Place

East of the Court House—for the Best in Wines, Liquor AND Cigars

Bond & Lillard, Old Elk, Sherwood Rye Whiskies.

Nulife Beer

Bottle or Keg
Henry Krumwiede, Dakota City, Nebraska

The American Boy

The SAFE boys' magazine
Only \$1 a year
The American Boy, \$1.00
The HERALD, - \$1.00
Both, for - \$1.65
Read by 500,000 boys